

The King in Jewish Post-exilian Writings.

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UNDER the old national cult the king was the head and representative of the nation, and the controller of the public religious life. David and Jeroboam I. reorganized the worship in Judah and Israel respectively, Solomon built for himself a temple which became in time the centre of Israelitish worship, Ahab and Athaliah introduced new cults, Jehoash controlled the priests of the Jerusalem temple, Ahaz set up a new altar in its court, Hezekiah and Josiah carried out the reforms suggested by prophets and priests. The sovereign kept pace with the moral progress of the people — the later kings show an ethical interest which does not appear in their predecessors. The king remained, however, simply the first man of the land, leader in war and peace, anointed of Yahweh, holding his office by a certain divine right (which was modified by the right of revolution), and valued according to his capacities. With a few exceptions the sovereigns were denounced by the prophets as unworthy. They were never idealized, unless it were in elegies (Ezek. 19, cf. 2 Chron. 35²⁵).

With the fall of Jerusalem the actual king vanished from the stage, not to reappear for nearly 500 years. But at the moment the expectation was that the obliteration of the national life would be brief, and that in the restoration the political head would, as before, be a king. We have from the pen of Ezekiel a delineation of what the future king should be — a portraiture which, though colored by that prophet's ecclesiastical views, doubtless represents a current opinion of the time. His king is little more than an appendage to the temple-service: his duty is to provide certain offerings, to be ritually precise and regular in attendance on the stated cultic occasions, and, for the rest, to be a just ruler.¹ In Ezekiel's description of the inva-

¹ This description furnishes, in part, the norm for all succeeding ones.

sion of the land of Israel by Gog there is no mention of a king—the enemy is to be destroyed by direct divine intervention; and he seems, in his concluding vision, to anticipate no need of military organization, and to regard the king merely as the natural political head of a people whose prosperity was to be assured by its obedience to the law of God. From the religious point of view he was, to the prophet, an insignificant element in the national life.

In marked contrast with this portraiture is that which is given in Jer. 33^{13,16} (less correctly worded in 23^{5,6}), which, if not by Jeremiah, belongs probably, at any rate, to the time of the exile. In this description there is no mention of ritual or of worship—the coming king, it is said, will rule with wisdom and justice, and under him Israel will be safe and happy. He is, of course, a member of the Davidic house, and is therefore called the Scion. This short prediction is interesting as being the first in a line of such prophecies, in which the stress is laid on the ethical qualities of the sovereign, a point which might naturally have been suggested by the unworthy characters of the last kings of Israel. His function is that of political ruler. He is not said to have any special relation to religion—he secures the well-being of the people by an equitable administration of affairs. Such, so far as our records go, was the broadest exilic prophetic outlook for the future. What other expectations may have existed at that time we have no means of determining.

The conditions of the period of exile and of the following four centuries made the establishment of an Israelitish kingdom impossible. How far the body of the Jews looked on such a restoration as possible it is difficult to say. In Babylonia the exiles made themselves comfortable and, apparently, accepted the rule of the Chaldeans, and afterward of the Persians, with content. The great prophetic seer of the exile (Isa. 40-48, and cf. 49-55) ardently desired the return of all the exiles to Canaan; he looks to the formation of a theocratic nation, and says nothing of human governors; he probably knew that Judea could be politically nothing but a Persian province. Comparatively few of the exiles returned, and the Judean community seems to have accepted Persian rule as a matter of course. The contemporary prophets, however, appear to cherish the dream of national independence. Haggai and Zechariah are concerned for the moment with the building of the temple, a function which is assigned to Zerubbabel. But he is a Davidic prince, and the natural head of the nation. Haggai declared that foreign kingdoms would be overthrown, and Zerubbabel made the signet of Yahweh. Zechariah

(Zech. 3^b 6¹²) called him the Scion (Branch),² and connected him with a period of tranquillity for Israel (cf. Isa. 4²). In a somewhat confused passage (Zech. 6^{a-13}) it even appears that a crown was put on his head, and the prediction made that he should sit and rule on the throne of Judah. However this may be, there seems to have been an expectation on the part of the prophets that Zerubbabel would restore the fortunes of Israel. They may have had ground for this hope in the revolts which then disturbed the Persian Empire, and such an attitude would be in keeping with the enthusiastic resolution which Jewish leaders showed at other times. We are concerned here not with the succeeding career of Zerubbabel,³ but only with the rôle which he was expected to fill. He was to be a king after the manner of the good later kings, to rule with equity and to be regardful of the national worship — quite in accordance with Ezekiel's sketch. If the title "Messiah" be given him (as is sometimes done), it must be recognized that the title in this case means religiously next to nothing. The real hope of the prophets is the restoration of the national independence, and Zerubbabel is important only in connection therewith. He is to be a temporal prince, not more occupied with religious matters than all Oriental princes were.

Zerubbabel was not succeeded, in the control of the Judean community, by a scion of the House of David. Judea was under governors and high priests till the Maccabean uprising.⁴ In this period of about 400 years the only great Jewish leader who appears on the scene is the Persian governor Nehemiah; the Jews, so far as the evidence goes, were content to be a province of a foreign empire, confining their military efforts to defence against the petty communities round about.⁵ But certain Old Testament predictions or expressions of hope, which probably belong in this period, refer to a coming king. What functions do they assign him? They appear simply to repeat the expectation of the preëxilic prophets, with such changes of form as were called for by the altered circumstances. In

² A title perhaps derived from Jer. 23⁵, possibly a common designation of the heir to the throne. Cf. Eng. *imp*, in Chaucer a "graft," in Spenser a "scion." It seems probable that the term is to be taken as implying lineal descent from David.

³ On this point cf. Stade, Renan, and Sellin, *Serubbabel*.

⁴ Nehemiah is not said to have been a member of the Davidic family.

⁵ The alleged participation of the Jews in the revolt of Egypt and Phoenicia (B.C. 350) against Artaxerxes Ochus (an inference from the Armenian version of the *Chronicon* of Eusebius) is uncertain; and in any case there is no mention of any Jewish leader.

all cases it is the reëstablishment of the nation that is the central fact — the king appears only as the head of the people. The title “king” is employed because a royal government was the only one thought of. The ethical qualities of the monarch are emphasized because such emphasis was demanded by the moral culture of the time, and for a similar reason he, like Ezekiel’s prince, is to be devoted to the worship of the God of Israel.

Mic. 5¹⁻⁸ relates in part to a time when the Jewish people are dispersed “among the nations”; it is doubtful whether the passage is a unity. The function of the Davidic king here described is purely political: he feeds the people as a flock, and repels invasions; this he does in the strength of Yahweh, that is, the military and civil strength given him by Yahweh.

The portraiture in Isa. 32¹⁻⁸ is wholly ethical: there is to be a line of princes, whose reign will be characterized by equity. The standard of life is so like that of Proverbs that the passage is naturally referred to the period of the sages. A striking point of agreement with Proverbs is the use of the term “noble” (נָדָב) in an ethical sense, as equivalent to “upright” (Pr. 8⁶ 17²⁶).

The prince of Isa. 11¹⁻⁹ also is a political ruler, infallibly wise and inflexibly just — a noble ideal, but still purely political. He represents, however, an enormous social revolution: the land of Israel is to be the scene of absolute peace, even wild beasts are to lose their savage nature, and the people are to be in sympathy with the law of God, the earth (or, land) is to be full of the knowledge of Yahweh. It is the picture of a renovated community, a church in the noblest sense of the word, a dream that many a man may have dreamed, a true kingdom of God on earth. But the king is not here said to be the producer of this Eden; the agent is God himself, and the king is simply the natural political head of the community.⁶

Such, in substance, is the picture in Isa. 9^{5, 6}. The king sits on the throne of David, his administration is one of wisdom, justice, might, and peace, and its result, which is brought about by the zeal of Yahweh, is the establishment of the nation in everlasting prosperity. The epithets applied to the monarch are remarkable and difficult, but they seem not to be intended to express supernatural power;⁷ he is

⁶ Cf. the paragraph 11¹¹⁻¹⁶, in which the ideal unit is obviously the nation.

⁷ The epithets in the Masoretic text are שָׂר שְׁלָם, אֲבִי עַד, אֵל נֹבֵד, פִּלְא יַעַן. Of these, פִּלְא, noun and verb, is sometimes used of things wonderful, extraordinary, but not superhuman (Lam. 1⁹ 2 Sam. 1²⁵ Isa. 28²⁹ *al.*). אֵל or אִיל may mean “prince, leader” (Ex. 15¹⁶ Ezek. 31¹¹); the rendering “mighty prince”

of the regular Davidic line, has apparently (vs.^{3,4}) rescued his people from oppression and destroyed the instruments of war, and is represented as an able and powerful ruler; but there is nothing in this general description which would not apply to such a prince, for example, as Hezekiah, though there are other reasons for not referring the prophecy to his time.

The king of Zech. 9⁹ is a mighty and peaceful monarch. He is described as just (or, righteous), made victorious, pious; he rules the whole world, but only to give it the blessing of prosperity. This is again a sublime conception of a world organized on the basis of righteousness and peace; but here, as before, the consummation is effected, not by the king, but by God. True, it is natural that an Old Testament writer should describe a king's work as the work of God; but we should expect, if it were the intention to make the king the chief agent or the central figure, a more detailed statement of his proceedings.

Though the Davidic house continued to be looked on as the natural ruler of Israel, the prophets were sometimes content to regard the family without laying stress on an individual chief ruler. So in Zech. 12⁷-13¹ Jerusalem is to be defended, the house of David is to be as Elohim, and the sins of the city and the Davidic family are to be washed away. The royal house is here not separated in character and function from the people. The tone of the passage is ritualistic, and the prophet's ideal is a time when the meanest object in Jerusalem shall be ritually pure, and the Jerusalem temple shall be the shrine of the whole world.

cannot be regarded as excluded by the "mighty God" of Isa. 10²¹, which occurs in a different section as an epithet of Yahweh (cf. Jer. 32¹⁸), and is inapplicable to a king; nowhere else in the Old Testament is אֱלֹהִים, in the sense of "a divinity," used of a man. As to the third expression, every interpretation that takes אָבִי as "possessor" appears to be excluded by Hebrew usage of language, and the only well supported translation of the phrase is "everlasting father," an epithet that does not accord very well with the others (but cf. the "no end" of vs.⁶); possibly the text is corrupt. The fourth expression gives a good sense as it stands (cf. the שֵׁשׁ שָׁלֵל of vs.⁶), and there is no need to emend to אָבִי, which, moreover, is a strange and improbable phrase. In the third epithet, the emendation אָבִי הָרַד, in the sense "possessor of glory," for the reason given above, cannot be accepted; and in the sense "glorious father" it hardly has any advantage over the reading of the text. Considering the general parallelism between 9⁹ and 11², we might here expect an expression = "wise," and some such reading as מִבֵּן רֵעִים might be suggested. But, in the absence of any decisive betterment, the Masoretic text may stand, with the understanding that the epithets describe a great and good king.

It appears, therefore, that, in the prophetic picture of the future of Israel and of the world, the king plays the part not of creator, but of the wise and just head of a community called into being and maintained by God. The king is a descendant of David, morally perfect, but not the founder of Israel's greatness, and not a source of moral and religious inspiration and enlightenment. He is simply the highest secular officer of the Israelitish community. It is the nation of which the prophets spoke, and their picture is that of a kingdom of God, a people whose moral life stands in immediate relation with God, king and priest differing from people not in religious character, but only in official position.

The picture of the king given in the Psalter does not differ substantially from that of the prophets. In some cases it has the appearance of a dramatized form of the prophetic description. We are not called on here to decide whether the king in the Psalms is a real monarch, a contemporary of the poet, or an idealized figure of the past, or the ideal sovereign of the future (though this question will naturally present itself); we are concerned to know only the rôle that is assigned him, and especially his religious significance. In the references to him the same characteristics appear that we have found in the prophets: he is the political head of Israel, and the peace and supremacy of the nation are effected by God.

In ψ 2 the king is a conqueror established by Yahweh, — it is said of him that he shall dash the nations to pieces; but the psalmist's concluding exhortation to the kings and rulers is that they submit themselves to Yahweh lest he be angry and destroy them. The psalmist's interest is in the universal acceptance of the Israelite religion, and the monarch secures this end, not by moral or religious teaching, but by political conquest. The outlook in the psalm is based on the view, which was in accord with ancient ideas, that the religious cult was or might be determined by the political relations; the king is here Yahweh's agent, but only in the sense that he represents the military power of the nation.

The speaker in the body of ψ 18 seems to be neither the ideal king nor the idealized David, but the Israelitish people. The reference is clearly to the nation in vs.²⁸ ("thou wilt save the pious people") and in vs.⁵⁰ ("I will praise thee among the nations"), and there is nothing in vs.¹⁻⁵⁰ which may not be understood naturally of national deliverances and hopes, while the claim to religious and moral perfectness (vs.²¹⁻²⁵) is more suitable as the expression of the national consciousness of legal rectitude than as the assumption of

any individual man. The last verse of the psalm (which appears to be a scribal addition) introduces the king; he is spoken of merely as the recipient of divine protection, and not as a religious leader. Cf. 1 Sam. 2¹⁻¹⁰ and ψ 144^{1. 2. 5-11}.

Psalm 20 is uttered by the people; it is the expression of confident expectation of national success. If the last verse be translated, "O Yahweh, save the king, and answer us when we call" (so Sept.), it is simply our "God save the king," and the king is merely the chief man of the nation.

The picture in ψ 21 is more definite: the king trusts in Yahweh, and receives prosperity, long life, glory, and victory. His success, which is purely political, not at all religious, is the national success — the real centre of the psalmist's thought is the nation, his enemies are the enemies of the nation. It is difficult to resist the impression that ψ 20. 21 refer to real kings; but this point is unimportant for the present discussion. Psalm 21 ends with the words: "Arise, O Yahweh, in thy might — we will celebrate thy power."

It is unfortunate that the text of ψ 45 is unsound at the very point (vs.^{12. 13}) which might give a distinct historical reference. It seems clear, however, that the psalm is an epithalamium. The king is praised for his charm of person, his military prowess, and his just or righteous administration of affairs, and the widest fame is predicted for him (vs.^{7. 18}). There is no allusion to Israel, and it is doubtful whether the king is Jew or Gentile; in any case he has no religious significance.

In ψ 61 a pious Israelite, living far from Jerusalem, expresses the desire to dwell in the Temple, and adds a prayer for the prosperity of the king. The psalm contains little more than a hope for national success. The king is real.

It is doubtful whether ψ 63 contains a reference to a king. In vs.^{12a} the parallelism calls for some such term as "righteous,"⁸ equivalent to "he who swears by him" (= "he who worships him") in the second line. In any case the reference is merely to the personal piety of the man mentioned.

The resemblance between the pictures in ψ 72, ψ 45, and Isa. 11 is obvious — in all these passages the king is a just, beneficent, and famous ruler. There is no reason to regard the hero of ψ 72 as anything but a secular king. The psalm is perhaps a prayer for his prosperity, and the hope is expressed that he will rule Israel with justice and have dominion over all the world. It is a natural Oriental

⁸ צדיק instead of מלך.

laudation of the political head of the nation. Only the result is expressed — the absolute supremacy of Israel; nothing is said of the prowess of the king.

The absorption of the idea of royalty in the idea of the nation is illustrated in ψ 89. The psalm begins with praise to Yahweh for his mighty deeds in the earth (vs. 2-13, omitting vs. 4, 5, which appear to be an editorial insertion), and rejoicing in the fact that Israel is his people, and he its strength and its king (vs. 16-19); it then repeats the ancient prophecy that the throne of David should be established for ever (vs. 20-28); and next follows a picture of extreme national humiliation and sorrow (vs. 30-32). The psalm seems not to be a unity — the third passage is perhaps a separate poem. The interesting fact is that in this last passage the term "anointed" is used in such a way as makes it hard to determine whether it refers to the king or to the people: the singular pronouns and the words "crown" and "youth" would point to an individual; on the other hand, the expressions "walls" and "fortresses," and the statement that the "anointed" is "despoiled" and "mocked" by his "neighbors," are rather appropriate to the nation. The more natural interpretation of these facts is that the nation is represented as a crowned king — in former days God's promises were made to a real monarch, now the royal office has ceased to exist, and the nation is the heir of the promises.

The hero of ψ 110 is a priest, to whom is ascribed the career of a victorious general or (as v. 1 suggests) ruler or king. He is a religious official, but is not connected in the psalm with spiritual power.

The promise to David that his dynasty should never come to an end (2 Sam. 7) was a source of confidence to later generations. On it the author of ψ 132 bases his appeal. It is a time of perplexity (v. 10); Yahweh seems to turn his face away from his "anointed"; but the psalmist cites another oracle (found in 2 Chron. 6^{41, 42}) in which it is said of Solomon that he shall be victorious over his enemies. Thus, from records of former times, he shows that Yahweh's word is pledged that the Davidic house shall be perpetual. The fortunes of this house, however, he identifies with those of Israel; he, in fact, rests his hope on Yahweh's declaration that he has chosen Zion (v. 13), and will bless her people. Here, as in ψ 89, there may be a doubt whether the "anointed" is king or people.

With these passages should be compared those in which Yahweh himself is called king, and his kingdom is described (as in Daniel) as everlasting (ψ 47. 48. 93. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 145. 146. 149, and perhaps others).

The difficulty of assigning exact dates to individual psalms makes it hard to establish a chronological order in the passages cited. But we are probably warranted in saying that, alongside of the interest in an existing king or the hopes based on a king to come, there arose the expectation of a kingdom of God on earth, composed of the people of Israel, politically prosperous, morally unblamable, and secure of the favor of God. And, as appears from what is said above, when the king is mentioned, his rôle is simply that of political (or priestly and political) head of the nation.

In the Wisdom books the "king" is introduced merely as a representative of royal rule. He is spoken of as a person to be feared, obeyed, propitiated (Job 15²⁴ 29²⁵ 34¹⁸ 41²⁶ Pr. 14³³ 19¹² 20^{2,8} 22²⁹ 24²¹ Tob. 12⁷), or as controlled by God (Job 12¹⁸ Pr. 21¹), or in general as the wielder of unlimited power (Pr. 25³ Ecc. 8²⁻⁴ 10³⁰), or the office is idealized (Pr. 8¹⁵ 16¹⁰⁻¹³ 20^{28,28} 29⁴), or kings are exhorted to be wise and just (Ben-Sira 10¹⁻³, Wisd. Sol. in 1-9). There is no specific reference to an Israelitish king, no anticipation of a deliverer. The sages look on the royal office as a fixed institution of society, and endeavor to secure moral training for it.

In the succeeding literature (Daniel, Tobit, Judith, Enoch, the Sibyllines,⁹ 1 Macc.) there is no mention of a king till we come to the Psalms of Solomon, which revives the prophetic and poetical picture of the political deliverer—a king with the ordinary royal ethical and religious functions.¹⁰

After the interval of nearly a century and a half a Messianic king appears in the Apocalypse of Baruch, but in an apocalyptic setting, a ruler who is to usher in the final period of peace for Israel.

The prophetic passages cited above, beginning with the exile, come down into the Greek period, covering a space of about 300 years, and they all contain predictions of a future king. The psalms that bear particularly on the questions we are considering belong probably in the same period; for, of those mentioned, five (ψ 20. 21. 45. 61. 110) refer to a real contemporary sovereign, of two (89. 132) it is doubtful whether the royal figure referred to in them is the king or the nation, and the remaining four (2. 18. 72. 144), which give an ideal picture, may all be placed between the years B.C. 500 and

⁹ The reference in iii. 652 is not to an Israelitish king.

¹⁰ The characterization in Ps. Sol. 17²³⁻³¹ is drawn wholly from the older books (Dt., Prophets, Pss.), and adds nothing to their content; and the same thing is true of the description in ψ 18. The writer's concern is for the nation (17⁶¹ 18²), of which the king is to be the head and protector.

B.C. 300. The case, therefore, so far as the existing material gives information, stands thus: visions of a happy national life under a king occupied the minds of Jewish patriots from the fall of Jerusalem till the establishment of the Maccabean rule, and after that time for a moment only (on the occasion of the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey) up to the end of the first century of our era. In all cases the king was conceived of as a temporal sovereign, chiefly interesting as being the political head of the nation.

The course of Jewish thought, in regard to the point under consideration, appears to have been as follows: Just after the fall of Jerusalem the expectation of the political restoration of the nation carried with it the assumption of a royal head (Ezek., Jer. 23^d). When the moment of return came, the circumstances were such as to exclude the possibility of a kingly government, and the seers of the time confined themselves to an exhortation to the people to give up their Babylonian homes and go to Palestine (Isa. 40-48). Certain members of the little Judean community, though conscious of its weakness, felt encouraged, by the disorders of the Persian Empire, to hope that Zerubbabel might assume the crown and mount the throne, but this hope, cherished, perhaps, by very few, speedily vanished when the strong hand of the Persian king was felt. Still, under Persian rule, the ideal of the old form of government was retained. Jerusalem was remote from Susa, and it may have seemed to ardent patriots of the time quite within the limits of possibility that a distant province should recover its independence. Such boldness of determination was characteristic of the old Hebrew — so Hezekiah revolted against the Assyrians, Zedekiah against the Babylonians, Judas against the Seleucids, the later leaders against the Romans, and, if we may trust Eusebius (which, however, is doubtful), the Jews of the fourth century B.C. against the Persians. The times were sufficiently unsettled to make a hope of independence not quite unreasonable, and prophets and psalmists continued to sketch the future of the nation as the government of an ideally perfect king. This form of hope survived the fall of the Persian Empire, maintaining itself through the unsettled times that followed the death of Alexander. Then a change came over the spirit of the nation. The loose aggregation of the Persian Empire was succeeded by the compact Greek monarchies of Western Asia and Northeastern Africa. The Jews were incorporated in the great Greek communities as they had never before been incorporated in a foreign nation. In many places they adopted the Greek language and Greek customs, began

to study Greek literature, threw themselves heartily into the commercial life of the time, became, in a word, citizens of Greek kingdoms, or citizens of the world. Their interests were in their new homes. The spirit of nationalism declined, and with it the spirit of prophecy. The last considerable body of prophetic utterances appears to have been delivered just as the Hellenic kingdoms were on the point of consolidation.¹¹ At a later time of grievous trial a psalmist (*ψ* 74) mourns the fact that there is no longer a prophet in Israel. The Jews were content with their present. It needed the heavy hand of Antiochus Epiphanes to rouse them from their repose. But when the Maccabean struggle ended, the nation had its ruler, at first a priest, then a priest-king. Its dream of independence was realized in a sort, though independence brought small glory or profit. Moreover, the Hasmonean rulers were by no means acceptable to all the people, and when they allied themselves with the Sadducees, they became to the Pharisees reprobates and enemies of Israel and of God. The entrance of Pompey into Jerusalem and into the Temple seemed the culmination of dishonor, and the old spirit of prophetic nationalism, flaming up for an instant, found expression in the bitter denunciation which the author of the Psalter of Solomon (17³² ff.) hurls at the Hasmonean princes, and in his prediction of the advent of a king of the right sort, a king, that is, of the Pharisaic party. This was the last effort of the old Hebrew spirit of prophecy.¹² The figure of the king vanishes from the stage, not to reappear till toward the end of the first century of our era, and then only in reminiscent or apocalyptic form.¹³ The Gospels look back on Jesus as the king of the new kingdom, and apply to him the predictions of the prophets. The New Testament Apocalypse, drawing its imagery partly from the Old Testament, partly from other sources, portrays him as king of the coming kingdom. It was a season of trial and expectation, and the hope of the pious naturally expressed itself under the form which Jewish patriots had used, in like circumstances, hundreds of years before.

¹¹ Isa. 19¹⁸⁻²² appears to belong to the second century B.C.; on the Psalter of Solomon see below.

¹² John the Baptist represents a new idea, — the conception of a present kingdom of God on earth.

¹³ The belief that a king might arise to free Israel from the Roman yoke seems not wholly to have disappeared; witness the uprisings under Judas and Theudas.